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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0182
INFO CIS COLLECTIVE
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0046
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0070
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0062
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0059
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0062
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0070
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0046
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001539

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA AND DRL
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2018-12-31
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ACCUSED OF FRAUD

REF: a) TASHKENT 1355; TASHKENT 22; TASHKENT 1463

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard Fitzmaurice, Poloff; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (U) On December 31, Radio Free Europe's Uzbek-language Ozodlik.org website reported that Ezgulik human rights activist Karim Bozorboev has been accused of fraud by law enforcement officials in Gulistan in Syrdarya province. According to the article, Bozorboev was accused of swindling a 60-year old pensioner, Muqimjon Maratboev, out of 200,000 soums (146 dollars) after offering to help him open a bank account. Bozorboev asserted that law enforcement officials opened the criminal investigation against him in retaliation for his human rights activities. The article also noted that Bozorboev was charged with blackmail last year and accompanied poloff during a tour of cotton fields this fall, after which he was assaulted by a police officer.

BOZORBOYEV LARGELY CONFIRMS OZODLIK STORY

12. (C) Poloff spoke with Bozorboev by telephone, who largely confirmed the details of the Ozodlik story. Bozorboev explained that he was first approached by Maratboev in February, who was interested in applying for a microcredit loan to open a bakery through the local branch of the Asaka bank in Gulistan. He reportedly requested 4.73 million soums (3,450 dollars) from the bank, but was told he could not apply for a loan without sufficient collateral, such as an automobile, which he did not own. Maratboev then asked Bozorboev's assistance in opening a bank account, another required step for receiving a loan. Bozorboev said he took 100,000 soums from Maratboev in May to open the bank account, spending approximately 84,000 soums on required paperwork and fees and 16,000 on transportation in Gulistan. He explained that he had receipts for the 84,000 soums.

13. (C) Bozorboev explained that he did not hear anything more about the incident until recently, when he was questioned by law enforcement officials and was accused of swindling 200,000 soums from Maratboev. According to Bozorboev, the Prosecutor filled out the complaint against Bozorboev himself and simply had Maratboev sign it.

¶4. (C) Bozorboev asserted that the criminal investigation was politically-motivated and in retaliation for his human rights work, noting that he had been similarly charged with blackmail in December 2007. He was sentenced to three and half years' imprisonment, but was amnestied on January 4, 2008.

¶5. (C) Bozorboev explained that the criminal investigation against him was continuing and that he had not been formally charged with fraud yet. However, he believed that he would be formally charged after the New Year holiday. Bozorboev said he planned to travel to Tashkent, and poloff offered to meet with him.

PROSECUTOR DROPS INVESTIGATION IN MVD OFFICER

¶6. (C) In late November, the head of Ezgulik's Gulistan office, Isroil Rizaev, told poloff that law enforcement officials had agreed to investigate a police officer who hit Bozorboev after he had provided poloff a tour of local cotton fields in October (ref C). However, Bozorboev explained that the Prosecutor has since dropped the case against the MVD officer.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) We are concerned that the charges against Bozorboev might be politically motivated and will continue to follow his case closely. The recent conviction of human rights activist Akzam Turgunov in Karakalpakstan on similar blackmail charges demonstrates that provincial law enforcement officials are not above these sorts of tactics. Still, there may be other than simply political issues involved. Bozorboev's explanation of why he received money from Maratboev to open a bank account and how this was related to the application for a microcredit loan are somewhat unclear, though hopefully Bozorboev will be able to provide us more details when we see him in person. While it is possible that authorities are still retaliating against Bozorboev for providing poloff a tour of local fields where children were picking cotton, the fact that Bozorboev was already convicted on blackmail charges last year before meeting poloff suggests that this is not necessarily the case.

NORLAND

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSSSearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:3_b066ead-155e-4035-b2dc-56777a9974b7